

STANDARD PASHTO AND THE DIALECTS

OF PASHTO

By

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1. Introduction

The relation between the standard language and the various and descriptive significance, and its important for practical reasons as well science educational, communication, and publication problems are liked to it. We must distinguish between the written standard language, which is used in all kinds of writing and spoken standard language, as speaker would use it in a formal lecture or as it can be heard on the radio or the stage. In this article we shall investigate the relation between standard Pashto and the dialects. 1

It is obvious that we do not find anything resembling the great difference that exists between colloquial Persian and literary Persian in the case of Pashto. Actually written Pashto reflects the spoken language quite closely. Dialectal differences appear in it, thus "Standard Pashto" in its written form is uniform and homogeneous. The differences concern syntax, vocabulary, ending, and the speech-sounds. We shall take up the various linguistic aspects one by one and note the type of difference we can observe.

2. Syntactic Differences

The Syntactical differences between the dialects of Pashto are insignificant: the same type of word-order and sentence structure that same grammatical categories prevail everywhere. The fact that in some dialects da 2'is the feminine form is used, instead of day, also for the masculine, is more a formal (morphemic) feature than a syntactical

1) My study of Pashto dialects in 1958 and 1959 has been carried out under a fellowship from the Government of Afghanistan and a small grant from the Horece H. Rackam School of Graduate Studies of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

2) The transcription and grammatical terminology used here is, on the whole, the one used in my grammar of Pashto: A Descriptive Study of the Dialect of Kandahar, Afghanistan" (American Council of Learned Societies, Washington D.C. 1955)

Penzl, Herbert, Standard pashto
and the dialects of pashto

in: Afghanistan 14/3, S. 3-14

Kabul, Hist. Soc., 1959. 24/17, 5 cm

since otherwise the general distinction between masculine and feminine feature is found in these dialects too. In writing of course, day is always used for the masculine: it is the "standard" Pashto form.

There is some variation in passive phrases with forms of keedel between the use of the perfect participle and the use of a special passive participle ending in -el (feminine -ela): day wabelay keezzi and day wabel keezzi 'he is (being) beaten'. Both types are found in writing, thus considered "standard". There is fluctuation in the use of oblique case and direct case after certain participles: pe mdzekee kasee and pe mdzeka kasee 'on the ground'. Both constructions are used in writing.

3. Vocabulary

We find several types of vocabulary distinctions in the dialects: (1) completely differently forms are used for the same meaning, e.g. doobay (doobey) and oorray 'summer', looy and ster 'great', big', tsoorimunay and pearlay 'spring'; (2) the forms differ in some consonants or vowels but otherwise resemble each other; e.g. wradz, rwadz and wreedz 'day', lund and tund 'wet', wlaarr and laarr '(he) went', chi, tser tse 'that', dee, di, de da 'of'; (3) there is a difference in meaning between the forms, e.g., lmar 'sun' and lmar 'heat' or 'sunshine' (sterga 'sun').

Dialectal forms of definitely local meaning are avoided in writing, but if the competing forms with a general not locally restricted meaning do not resemble each other in their shape, they may be freely used as "standard" forms. Forms of another dialect may then be adopted by writers for stylistic reason. In the newspapers of Kabul ster is frequently used besides looy, although the dialectal exclusive occurrence of ster seems to be restricted to southern and southeastern areas of the Paktia province and parts of Bannu and Kohat. Forms differing somewhat in their phonemic composition or, as linguistic scientists would refer to them, morphemic variants are seldom considered equally acceptable. Only wradz, lund chi are, on the whole, ever used in writing; the different forms of de 'of' are hidden by the orthography, which simply consists of 'd' and nothing else. It is interesting to note that in meetings arranged by the Pashto Academy in Kabul, where questions of orthographic practice and the standing of certain forms used by writers have been discussed in 1942, 1948, and lately in the summer of 1958, varying morphemic shapes of word-forms

as revealed by the orthography have played an important part: wradz was approved, both psarlay and sparlay, in 1942 only wlaarr, in 1958 both wlaarr and laarr, etc. 1 Locally restricted semantic variants, e.g. sterga 'eye' sun' usually not admitted to "standard" status.

4. Inflectional Endings.

Striking dialectal distinctions are provided by the inflectional endings, which occur not singly as the vocabulary items, which are called free forms or free morphemes, but as inseparable parts of many words, as bound forms or bound morphemes. The question which endings are "standard" comes up when morphology of Pashto is described for speakers of Pashto themselves or for speakers of Persian or English, German, and other foreign languages. Let us consider some important morphemic differences.

Dialects vary in the distribution of the feminine plural morpheme -gaane; some prefer khwaagane to khwaawee 'cows'. Some dialects have the oblique masculine plural ending -nnoo, e.g. kooranoo, of the house', others, e.g. the Kandahar dialect; have loud-stressed oo: kooroo. The optative ending is -ay in some -ay in other dialects: (kashkee) rasedelaay, (if he only) arrived "the second person plural ending -aast is a typical Kandahar form, also used in Farah, Herat and in Dera Ismail Khan which occurs in past and some present verbal forms 2, elsewhere he ending is -ey: waast and wey 'you (plural) were'. The third person singular masculine past ending of the verb vary; the zero ending, the central vowel -a (called zwarakay in Pashto grammar), -oo (called majhul waaw), -ey occur in various dialects: welid, welide, welidoo, welidey, (he) was seen'. The corresponding past form of the auxiliary has usually a form different from other verbs: wa or we or woo, (he) was', which is either identical with, or different from the third person masculine plural form.

The descriptions of the grammarians reveal to what extent they are ready to consider their own dialect forms as standard or to

1) See the report in the magazine Kabul, issue 465 (1958), pages 1-14

2) "Grammar of Pashto", sections 82. 1b, 82.3c.

recognize other dialect variants as acceptable. The grammars of Saleh Muhammad Khan, Mohammad Azam Ayaazi reflect the usage of Kandahar. Sadiq ullah Reshtin's grammars the dialects of the Ningarhar province, Qazi Rahim-ullah Khan's book the peshawar dialect. 1 Ayaazi prefers the Kandahar ghawee. Reshtin the kbwangaanee and koorunoo of Ningarhar. the Kandahar grammarians quote only optative forms in -ay, Reshtin also -ay, Rahim-ullah only -ay. Salih Mohammad quotes the Kandahar ast form, which Ayaazi prefers to -ey, Rahimullah only -ey, the Kandahar masculine past form in -ey (welidey) is avoided by Saleh Mohammad and by Ayazi who quote endingless forms and forms in -e (wlid, welide) -oo (welidoo) is Rahimullah's preference. In the meetings arranged by the Pashto Academy the morphemes -gaanee and -unoo were not mentioned. The optative form waay 'were' with -ay was recommended (1942). waast and wey are both accepted (1942). The endingless form welid is preferred for the past, unless we have a change in the stem-vowel from a to aa, then the ending -e is approved: e.g. wetaare (he) was tied (1942, 1948). For the past forms of the auxiliary, we (3rd sing. masc.), written simply 'w', and wuu or wu (3rd plural masc.), written 'ww', seem to be suggested by the recommended orthography.

Thus the Kandahar -ast morpheme is also recognized as standard but not the 3rd person masculine past ending -ey. This does not mean that Kandahar authors, e.g. A.R. Benawa, would hesitate to use -ey forms in writing. Similarly in Peshawar, -oo is apparently generally used. The endingless form (welid) is actually extremely rare in the dialects when there is no special change in the stem vowel. The recommended type we (3rd sing. masc.) wu (3rd plural masc.) is found in the Logar valley and in a few scattered places but is quite uncommon. Kandahar has wu (3rd sing. masc.) and we (3rd plural. masc.)

5. Phonemes.

The difference between the various dialects concern: (1) the number of distinctive speech-sounds or, in linguistic terminology,

1) See Herbert Penzl, Afghan Descriptions of the Afghan (Pashto) Verb, in Journal of the American Oriental Society, volume 71, pp. 97-111 (1951); and Die substantive des Pashto nach afghanischen Grammatiken, in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, vol. 102, pp. 52-61 (1952).

phonemes in the various positions; (2) they concern their grouping and contrastive features within the phonemic pattern; (3) they involve the presence or absence of nondistinctive variants (allophones) of such phonemes; (4) they concern the frequency of such phonemes, also their appearance or absence in certain phonemic sequences. The special symbols of the Pashto alphabet itself show that the cradle of the alphabet must have been in Kandahar. The standard Pashto orthography follows the phonemic distinctions as found in the Kandahar dialect. Even the speakers of dialects where the number phonemes differs from the Kandahar dialect use this standard orthography when they write. Even if in their dialect, e.g., as in Peshawar, z has coalesced with g, z with kh, dz with z, z with g, they accept the Kandahar orthography as standard and try to make its phonemic distinctions in writing, e.g. they write raseczzi ^{not} raseegi 'reaches', see 'good' not khe, sook 'who, not sook, etc. Only in one instance has a local dialect found a reflex in writing: the diphthong ay of other dialects has become a lower mid front ee sound in the Peshawar dialect and is often written in Peshawar publications by the symbol for ee (called majhula yee), although the two phonemes have not completely coalesced: e.g. saree for saray 'man'. This practice was condemned by the orthography conference of the Pashto Academy in 1958.

Dialects vary as to the frequency and distribution of the z and zh and the z zh and j phonemes. In some words of high frequency z appears instead of zh in many dialects of the provinces of Kabul and Paktia, in Ghazni, Kandahar, Herat, in Dera Ismail Khan; sta 'there is' for shat, sem '(I) can' for shem. Some Kandahar authors, e.g. Saleh Mohammad in his grammar and Abdul-Hay Habibi have used such z-forms consistently, but they are not considered the standard forms and are avoided by others, e.g. Ayazi and Benawa. The 1942 meeting of the Pashto Academy rejected the z forms. In the 1958 meeting they warned against the use of z or j for zh as in zeba or jeba for the correct zheba 'tongue, language'. Speakers of dialects where z and zh have coalesced and only z is spoken, e.g. Rishkhor near Kabul, might use such spellings as zeba, zamay for zhamay 'winter', etc and speakers of dialects where the voiced affricate j has taken the place of zh, as e.g. in Kama near Jalalabad, might write jeab, jamay.

A frequency and distribution difference is involved in the occurrence of i instead of ee, u instead of oo in syllables outside of the main stress: e.g. zhebi 'language', zhebu (oblique case) in the Kandahar dialect, which corresponds to zhebee and zheboo elsewhere ("Grammar of Pashto", section 58.3). Since this variation is found in inflectional endings, it has been described in the Afghan grammars. The meetings of the Pashto Academy have not paid any attention to this dialectal difference, probably because the orthography does not necessarily express the difference between i and ee and cannot express the difference between u and oo. This may also be the reason why the Kandahar forms are considered quite standard and acceptable.

The distribution of the two short vowel phonemes a and e differs in the various dialects, e.g. in Kandahar zhebe occurs besides zheba, elsewhere only zheba. Since the distinction between final a and e is not expressed by the orthography, both forms seem equally correct.

6. Spoken and written standard Pashto.

The presence or absence of allophones, e.g. of higher variants of long mid vowels before weak-stressed vowels with a high tongue position following in the next syllables, e.g. in gooru 'we look' ("Grammar of Pashto", section 9), may be quite a striking dialectal feature, but is of no importance for the question of a Pashto language standard, since only a pronunciation feature is involved. Is there then actually any Standard Spoken Pashto parallel to Standard Written Pashto? We do find in one instance a spoken standard prevailing. The phonemes f and g, the glottal stop, and the Arabic pharyngeal fricative h sound as found in Arabic and Persian loan-words are rendered in various ways by speakers of Pashto but in the more formal type of pronunciation the tendency is obvious not to substitute Pashto p for f, Pashto k for g, Pashto h for the Arabic h fricative, and to pronounce the glottal stop after and before a vowel ("Grammar of Pashto", section 37.40). But the basis for this tendency is the orthography; so again it is the written form that influences the pronunciation.

In the dialect of Khost in the Paktia province ploor appears for plaar 'father', meer for moor 'mother', liir for lur (laur) 'daughter'. Such extreme types are not acceptable. Otherwise there seems to be no standard of pronunciation that is definitely adhered to, except for an

occasional effort to conform to the type one prefer in writing. In his book "The Modern Pushtu Instructor" (Peshawar 1938) Rahimullah gives a transcription of his pronunciation in the Latin alphabet; he does not hesitate to teach his local Peshawar pronunciation, which differs considerably from the written standard, to foreigners as a correct form of the language: wraz for wradz 'day' Khaza for sedza 'woman', etc. No attempt seems to be made by speakers of dialects where the phonemes dz and z, u and ə, or ss and kh or sh, zz and g or zh have coalesced to make the distinctions they express in writing in a formal speech situation. The meetings called by the Pashto Academy in Kabul have correctly been announced as dealing with orthography only. No spoken standard or pronunciation which would restrict the dialectal variation has ever been formulated, described, or taught.

7. Conclusion

In this article we have attempted to describe, the main features of the relation between the dialects of Pashto and Standard Pashto. The type of Pashto accepted as standard is not identical with the dialect of any region, but the generally accepted orthography does agree with the phonemic system, not with all details of the phonemic distribution, of the dialect of Kandahar. There is really only a written standard, a Pashto Schriftsprache. A spoken standard exists only to the extent that extreme pronunciation types, where communication would be difficult, are excluded. Among Arabic and Persian loan-words a close oral approximation to the written form seems to enjoy a high prestige. Generally speaking, what is not found in the orthography, is unimportant for the question of the standard language.

The recommendations of the meetings arranged by the Pashto-Tolana in Kabul have not tended to favour any particular dialect. No effort has been made so far to influence the selection of the vocabulary or to limit or modify the number of spoken versions of Standard Pashto.